

LA OPERA

PLÁCIDO DOMINGO The Broad General Director
JAMES CONLON Music Director



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Press contacts:

LA Opera

Gary W. Murphy (213) 972- 972-7554 gmurphy@laopera.com

Melissa Goldberg (213) 972-7274 mgoldberg@laopera.com

Los Angeles Master Chorale

Libby Huebner (562) 799-6055, nyjazz@aol.com

Grant Gershon Joins LA Opera as Associate Conductor / Chorus Master and Extends Contract as Music Director of Los Angeles Master Chorale Through 2010/11 Season

(LOS ANGELES, CA) May 21, 2007 – Plácido Domingo, LA Opera’s Eli and Edythe Broad General Director, and Mark Foster, Chairman of the Los Angeles Master Chorale, jointly announced today that Grant Gershon will expand his role at the Music Center by joining LA Opera in the newly created position of Associate Conductor / Chorus Master while also continuing his role as Music Director of the Los Angeles Master Chorale by extending his contract through the 2010/11 Season. Mr. Gershon, who joined the Chorale in 2001, is currently celebrating his sixth year with the Chorale. Both LA Opera and the Los Angeles Master Chorale are resident companies of the Music Center of Los Angeles County.

New Post at LA Opera Announced

“Grant Gershon will join LA Opera as Associate Conductor / Chorus Master, effective at the beginning of the 2007/08 Season,” said Mr. Domingo. “This is very exciting news for Los Angeles Opera, and I am delighted to welcome Grant Gershon to the Company. He is an exceptional musician whose broad musical interests, technical mastery and impressive experience will be a huge asset to LA Opera. I have long admired his extraordinary work with the Los Angeles Master Chorale and elsewhere. This is a great coup for us to have him join

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us.” Mr. Gershon replaces William Vendice, who has chosen to step down from his position of Head of Music Staff / Chorus Master at the end of the current season. “I would also like to take this opportunity to recognize William Vendice for his many years of wonderful work with the Los Angeles Opera Chorus,” continued Mr. Domingo. “On behalf of everyone at LA Opera, we wish him well in all of his future endeavors and thank him for his significant contribution to the Company’s artistic excellence.”

Mr. Gershon, in collaboration with Mr. Domingo and Music Director James Conlon, will be responsible for building and shaping the Los Angeles Opera Chorus into a choral ensemble, with a distinctive musical identity and aesthetic. Mr. Gershon is a highly respected conductor who has been widely credited for making the Master Chorale one of the finest and most adventurous of all American choral organizations since taking the post of Music Director in 2001. His initial contract with LA Opera will run through the 2008/09 Season. Mr. Gershon returns to LA Opera after previously holding the post of Assistant Conductor / Principal Pianist from 1988 to 1994.

“I am very much looking forward to working in close collaboration with Grant Gershon,” said Music Director James Conlon. “He is one of the leading lights in America’s choral scene and LA Opera is most fortunate to have him as Associate Conductor / Chorus Master. I have been very happy working with the members of the LA Opera Chorus during my first season with the Company, and I know that Mr. Gershon’s mastery will add immeasurably to all of our coming productions.”

“With this appointment I am deeply honored by the trust that Plácido Domingo and James Conlon have put in me, and I look forward to working together with these two great musicians to further the artistic excellence of LA Opera,” said Mr. Gershon. “This is a tremendously exciting time of musical growth for the Company, and I am proud to be a part of its bright future. In my role as Chorus Master I look forward to working with the highly gifted members of the LA Opera Chorus, to building upon their many triumphs and together taking this ensemble

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to the greatest heights. As Associate Conductor I am thrilled to return to the opera pit and make music with my good friends in the LA Opera Orchestra.”

“I am delighted that Grant Gershon will join LA Opera while retaining his position at the Los Angeles Master Chorale,” said LA Opera Chairman and CEO Marc I. Stern. “The Music Center’s creative leadership has enabled all of us to work together in a new way to share our resources in a positive, inclusive atmosphere. This exciting development will help all of us at the Music Center build upon our increasingly dynamic arts community in downtown Los Angeles.”

Duties with Los Angeles Master Chorale Extended

Grant Gershon, Music Director of the Los Angeles Master Chorale since 2001, has also extended his contract with that renowned choir through the 2010/11 Season. “It is with great pleasure that we announce Grant’s continued association with the Los Angeles Master Chorale,” said Mark Foster, Chairman of the Los Angeles Master Chorale. “The contract extension will, among other things, allow for significant long-term artistic planning, provide continuity in leadership and ensure the Chorale continues to blaze ground-breaking trails. Under Grant’s visionary leadership, the Los Angeles Master Chorale has become the country’s preeminent chorus. He has set himself apart as a leader, innovator and exceptional musician and used those gifts to propel the Chorale to new heights in a relatively short period of time. We look forward to working closely with him to realize his artistic vision in the years to come.

“Additionally, Grant’s new association with our colleagues at LA Opera is great news for the Chorale, LA Opera, the Music Center and the entire Los Angeles arts community. As his prominence continues to grow, it can only serve to enhance the Chorale in ways we can’t even imagine. And his demonstrated success in leading the remarkable evolution of the Master Chorale will no doubt help him develop the LA Opera Chorus into an even more accomplished ensemble.”

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“I am extremely pleased to extend my commitment to the Los Angeles Master Chorale through the year 2011, and I am grateful to the Master Chorale’s Board of Directors for the trust that they have shown in me,” Mr. Gershon stated. “My relationship with this dynamic organization has been a source of great joy and deep satisfaction for me over the past five years. I am very happy that the word seems to be getting out these days—the LA Master Chorale is one of the most exciting, adventurous and accomplished vocal ensembles in the world. I am extraordinarily proud of what our extremely gifted singers have accomplished over the past few seasons, and, at the same time, I feel that we are still early in our journey together. I look forward to many more challenges and triumphs on the Walt Disney Concert Hall stage and to the continued artistic and spiritual growth of this great ensemble.

“As a native Angeleno, I cannot begin to describe the thrill and the pride that I feel in assuming these dual roles with two of the city’s most dynamic arts organizations. I strongly believe these two positions will complement each other and that LA Opera, the Los Angeles Master Chorale and the Music Center itself will benefit greatly by the close ties that my association with both organizations will engender. I also believe passionately that Los Angeles will continue to take a pivotal leadership role in the global arts scene, and as Music Director of the LA Master Chorale and Associate Conductor / Chorus Master of the LA Opera, I will do all that I can to ensure that LA remains the most universally envied city in the musical world.”

About Grant Gershon

Conductor Grant Gershon is equally at home with symphonic and choral music, opera and musical theater. Since 2001 he has been Music Director of the Los Angeles Master Chorale, which the *Los Angeles Times* has proclaimed “the most exciting chorus in the country under Gershon’s leadership.” According to composer John Adams, “Grant Gershon is one of those rarities we call ‘the complete musician’. My respect for his musicality—for his conducting, his extraordinary musical intuition and his formidable ear—knows no bounds.”

An ardent champion of new music, Mr. Gershon has given many world premiere performances, including major works by John Adams, Steve Reich, Ricky Ian Gordon,

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Christopher Rouse, Billy Childs, Don Davis, Tania León and Bobby McFerrin; as well as American premieres of works by Esa-Pekka Salonen, James MacMillan, Sofia Gubaidulina and Mark Anthony Turnage. His *Nonesuch* recording with the LA Master Chorale of Steve Reich's *You Are (Variations)* was honored with the WQXR Gramophone America Award for 2006. *The New York Times*, *Washington Post* and *Newsday*, among others, selected it as one of the top ten classical recordings of 2005. In 2002 he made his first CD with the Master Chorale, featuring the world premiere recording of Esa-Pekka Salonen's first choral work as well as Philip Glass's *Itaipú* (RCM 12004). His latest recording with the Chorale, Steve Reich's *Daniel Variations*, is due to be released on Nonesuch in the fall.

Mr. Gershon has appeared as guest conductor with the Houston Grand Opera, Minnesota Opera, Swedish Royal Opera, Juilliard Opera Theatre, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, the Gustav Mahler Chamber Orchestra and the Finnish chamber orchestra *Avanti!*, among others. He has also led performances at the many of the world's most prestigious festivals including the Ravinia, Edinburgh, Vienna, Aspen and Helsinki festivals as well as the Roma-Europa Festival and the Festival Otonno in Madrid. Many of these appearances have been as music director for projects by famed director Peter Sellars with whom Mr. Gershon has had a long artistic relationship.

He has served as chorus master on two Grammy Award-nominated CDs, *Sweeney Todd* (New York Philharmonic Special Editions) and Ligeti's *Grand Macabre* (Sony Classical). He was featured on the *Great Performers* series at Lincoln Center leading the LA Master Chorale in vocal works of Steve Reich, and on the *Making Music* Series at Zankel Hall. Later this season he will conduct the Utah Symphony in performances of Ricky Ian Gordon's acclaimed new opera *Grapes of Wrath*. As an educator, for the past four summers he has served as Music Director of the Idyllwild Arts Festival Chorus. Additionally, this summer he will conduct the Los Angeles Children's Chorus presentation of a new opera, *The Keepers of the Night*, by Peter Ash and Donald Sturrock, and he will make his debut at the Berkshire Choral Festival.

Prior to joining the Chorale, Mr. Gershon served as Assistant Conductor of the Los Angeles Philharmonic from 1994 to 1997, during which time he led performances at the Dorothy

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Chandler Pavilion and the Hollywood Bowl. Mr. Gershon also served as Assistant Conductor / Principal Pianist with LA Opera from 1988 to 1994, where he participated in over 40 productions and garnered a reputation as one of the country's exceptional vocal coaches.

He has also served as Assistant Conductor at the Salzburg Festival, the Berlin Staatsoper and the Festival Aix-En-Provence, working with conductors Esa-Pekka Salonen, Daniel Barenboim and Claudio Abbado respectively. Mr. Gershon is in demand as a pianist for such leading singers as Kiri Te Kanawa, Peter Schreier, Rod Gilfry and Audra McDonald. He received his bachelor of music degree *cum laude* in piano performance from USC, and he was named USC Thornton School of Music Outstanding Alumnus of the Year in May 2002. He currently serves on the USC Thornton Board of Councilors.

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